
The panel discussion concluded that there has not been much improvement in the country's media situation, and a great deal needs to be done toward helping media stakeholders realize their freedoms.



ETHIOPIA

As president, then as prime minister, Meles Zenawi led Ethiopia through its post-communist transition for 21 years, before dying of an illness a few weeks before the MSI panel convened to consider the state of the media in the country. The transition to his constitutionally mandated successor was smooth, particularly compared with the raucous election periods that cemented his authority in the 2000s.

His rule was controversial, as he earned praise for spearheading reforms that led to significant economic growth after decades of repeated famine and agricultural disasters. However, Meles also oversaw an oppressive environment for critics and tight limitations on the press. This was particularly obvious during Meles's three-month absence from public life, during which time press speculation was rife, yet the consequences for speaking out on the topic of his legacy or succession were dire in several cases. As a case in point, IREX has withheld the list of panelists who compiled this report to protect them from retribution.

The government's negative attitude toward the media did not change much; it has retained an oppressive attitude toward those engaged in the journalism trade, especially reporters who continue to work in a hostile environment. Some journalists are in prison, serving sentences ranging from three to seven years, while others still await trial and sentencing. Others are in exile in Europe or the United States, where they have started a loose network known as the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association in Exile.

The ruling party controls state media and their content. In several recent cases, private print outlets have been shut down after running afoul of officials. The government owns the country's main printing-press operator and has recently used that control to punish papers that have been critical of it. The country's antiterrorism law has likewise been applied to suppress opposition points of view.

The panel discussion concluded that there has not been much improvement in the country's media situation, and a great deal needs to be done toward helping media stakeholders realize their freedoms.

Ethiopia's scores remained close to the 2010 assessment, nearly entering the anti-free-press range. Its score for Objective 5 (supporting institutions) remains its weakest, with strict legal and practical restrictions on the operations of NGOs, infrastructure and equipment issues, and limited professional and trade associations.

Due to the oppressive political environment, panelists for Ethiopia agreed to participate only on condition of anonymity.

ETHIOPIA AT A GLANCE

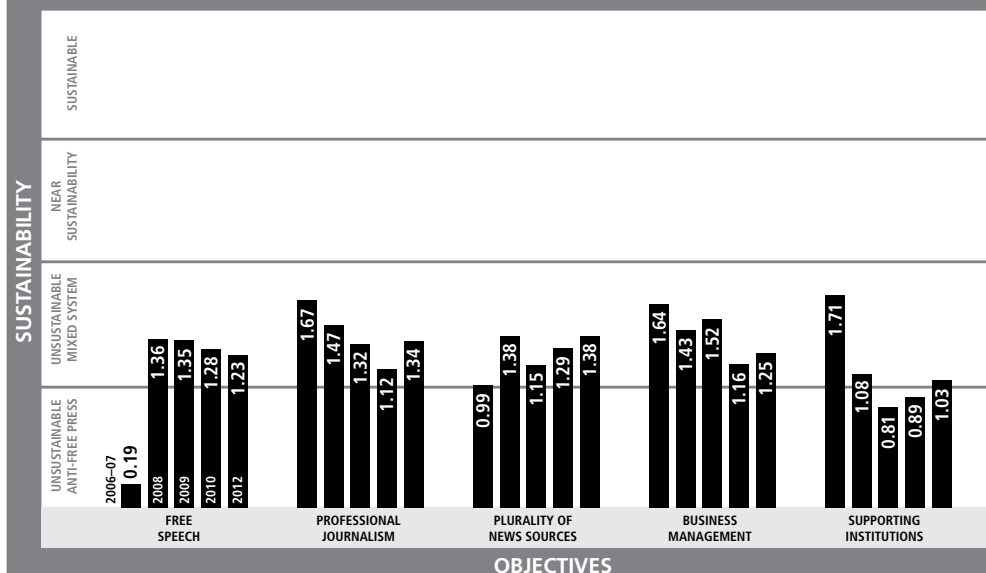
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 91,195,675 (July 2012 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Addis Ababa
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Oromo 34.5%, Amara 26.9%, Somalie 6.2%, Tigraway 6.1%, Sidama 4%, Guragie 2.5%, Welaita 2.3%, Hadiya 1.7%, Affar 1.7%, Gamo 1.5%, Gedeo 1.3%, other 11.3% (2007 Census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Orthodox 43.5%, Muslim 33.9%, Protestant 18.6%, traditional 2.6%, Catholic 0.7%, other 0.7% (2007 Census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Amarnigna 32.7%, Oromigna 31.6%, Tigrigna (official) 6.1%, Somaligna 6%, Guaragnigna 3.5%, Sidamigna 3.5%, Hadiyigna 1.7%, other 14.8%, English (official) (major foreign language taught in schools), Arabic (official) (1994 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$33.83 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$1,110 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 42.7% (male 50.3%, female 35.1%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Girma Woldegiorgis (since October 8, 2001)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 16 newspapers, including 3 dailies, 17 magazines; Radio Stations: 23, including 15 community stations, 5 private stations, and 10 state-owned stations; Television Stations: 1 main station, 3 regional stations (all state-owned)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Addis Zemen* (state-owned), *Ethiopian Herald* (state-owned), *The Daily Monitor* (private)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: Sheger Addis, Fana FM, Zami; Ethiopian Television (state owned) is the sole domestic television channel
- > **News agencies:** Walta Information Centre (private, pro-government), Ethiopian News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 447,300 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX ETHIOPIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Ethiopia Objective Score: 1.23

Regarding indicator 1, Ethiopia's constitution protects the right to freedom of expression in an unambiguous declaration under Article 29. Subsidiary laws, however, have tremendously and persistently weakened this guarantee in practice. The majority of Ethiopians, around 85 percent, get their news from state-owned and strictly controlled radio and television services. The print media are of little significance to many rural Ethiopians due to the low literacy rate, high level of poverty, and poor infrastructure that severely limit the impact and distribution of newspapers.

Social norms have not played a constructive role in strengthening freedom of speech. Laws passed by parliament and government directives over the past two years have steadily weakened it. An example is the country's antiterrorism legislation, which practically bans reporting, in any form or manner, on groups that parliament labels terrorist. The legislation was invoked by prosecutors in 2011 to detain and eventually convict two journalists.

Constitutional guarantees were likewise superseded by national-security exceptions in July 2012, when the long absence from office of ailing then-Prime Minister Zenawi created an information vacuum that was filled by papers and the blogosphere, putting the government in a defensive position of chasing and denying information. Authorities

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

shut down *Fitih*, an Amharic weekly newspaper known to be critical of the government; they invoked national-security concerns to confiscate 30,000 copies of the paper over reporting on the unconfirmed death of the prime minister and the growing friction between Muslim activists demanding noninterference of the government in religious affairs. *Fitih* has remained defunct, as the state printer does not want to run afoul of officials by upholding business relations with the paper.

A similar case involved the weekly *Finote Netsanet*, which is the official paper of the Unity for Democracy and Justice party. The paper was denied the use of printing facilities after it ran stories criticizing the policies of Meles and what it called the "excessive idolization and eulogy" heaped on him by the state media. The state printer moved swiftly to cancel its printing agreement with a vague citation of "discomforted public entities."

On paper, the Ethiopian constitution and law are harmonized with international human-rights and freedom-of-expression standards, but public trust in the independence of the judiciary remains among the worst in the world and has been deteriorating over the past seven years. Violations of civil rights do cause public outrage, but speaking out against the repression of free speech has become more dangerous.

"Freedom-of-expression rights protected under Article 29 of the constitution have been squeezed and blatantly violated by the state through broader interpretation of Sub-Article 6, which states that these rights can only be restricted by laws that do not infringe on the 'right to thought' and 'access to information,'" the panelists said. "The guarantees provided by the constitution are therefore deliberately usurped by many laws that directly strangle the constitution. The specter of the anti-terror bill poses serious threats on how media can operate. And investigative journalism is literally nonexistent."

In many documented cases, people who have spoken against imposed directives and violations have been threatened, have had their backgrounds "checked," and have been reprimanded by their bosses in government offices.

Confidentiality of sources is respected by law and, to a larger extent, in practice.

Regarding indicator 2, licensing and registration processes exist, but the processes lack transparency. Regulations are confusingly interpreted, selectively enforced, or simply violated. One broadcast panelist noted, "There is no fair and competitive process of licensing. We have tried to expand our coverage outside of the capital city, but we are told that it has not been allowed for private broadcasters. The positive side is that on paper, media licensing and content

is protected, apolitical, and competitive. But in practice, the competition in the market is not an equal playing field.”

Other panelists noted that the process is completely different for English- and Amharic-language publications, the latter of which has become “very politically charged. Licensing is either temporarily or otherwise stopped, which is illegal, unfair, and goes against the guarantees of the constitution.”

Another panelist noted, “Permit processes have been relatively smooth and fast in my case when I sought to publish an English-medium magazine, but I understand challenges have been mounting for others.”

No legal provisions preclude fairness in granting licenses, although interpretations by the executive branch render that moot. The appeal process for denied licenses is nearly meaningless because of the political basis of the denial of the requests. Party-affiliated media organizations receive preferential treatment; in a recent case, a directive that prohibits long-wave transmissions and ownership of more than one type of media outlet was circumvented for the party-affiliated Fana Broadcast Corporation, which broadcasts in AM and FM modes throughout the country. Likewise, the registration process has been used as a means to stop journalists of the *Awramba Times* (an Amharic weekly that went defunct when its editor-in-chief went into exile) from publishing a new weekly.

The main agency that regulates licensing, registration, and supervision of media is the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA). The process for appointing EBA officials is strictly overseen by the prime minister’s office and supervised by the Office of the Government’s Communication Affairs. A panelist noted: “Though the application process for licensing is straightforward, successful application does not necessarily guarantee that one succeeds in getting a license. The process is not transparent, and state-controlled media are given preference by default... One cannot say these institutions operate independently.”

At the International Press Freedom Day gathering at the Hilton Hotel Addis Ababa in 2011, an EBA official claimed (in comments that drew derisive laughter from some in the audience) that limits on licensing are “for the benefit of the applicants; it is because we are concerned in this saturated and competitive FM market [that] their business might suffer and they could go into bankruptcy.” Quite to the contrary, panelists agreed, the licensing process is used to limit the diversity of content in the media.

One panelist noted, “Licensing structures work in politically motivated ways and that they have close to no credibility and independence.” The panelist recounted the case of two former journalists for the *Awramba Times* whose application

was delayed and finally denied by the EBA for two reasons: their previous work was deemed “uncomfortable to government,” and the authority wanted to run a background check.

Another interesting development has been the coming of age of the Information Network Security Agency (INSA), which is under the Ministry of Defense and is housed on its premises. The secretive agency’s stated objective is to identify and address growing cyberthreats to the country and strengthen, secure, and oversee information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. A panelist noted that in reality, however, it has focused on cybersurveillance of social media, blocking opposition websites and those deemed “too sensitive for public consumption.” Local media reported that the latest Telecommunication Regulation Amendment (which strengthens a previous bill that essentially prohibits using voice-based communication services over the Internet without permission of the agency) was drafted by the INSA and presented to parliament by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Bloggers often have their URLs blocked by the INSA but do not require the regulating agency’s permission to function.

Regarding indicator 3, there are no official additional processes required for media organizations to register as a business or institution. Nevertheless, unwritten requirements may include consideration of applicants’ political views, their circle of friends and partners, and the views of EBA officials about the applicants’ likelihood to recognize and stay away from political “red lines” in content. There are no minimum capital requirements greater than those for non-media businesses; market entry is free, according to the law, but a directive states that owners cannot be editors-in-chief of their publications or broadcast stations. Panelists were encouraged by this requirement, as they noted their belief that wealthy but unethical owners of news organizations have damaged the media’s reputation.

Media outlets face a discouraging level of taxation, but it is no heavier than that levied on other private businesses. Paper for printing is heavily taxed, and with VAT and other taxes incurred at different stages of the publishing process, publishing and advertising costs are untenable.

The panelists mentioned a lack of financial incentives as one of two factors suppressing circulation numbers. Coupled with the fear of prosecution, the struggle to make print media profitable has led investors to shy away from the sector. The result is the concentration of almost all printing business in the hands of the biggest state printer, Birhanina Selam Printing. Newspapers struggle to cope with crippling expenses, to publish on schedule, and to keep up their

quality. At least two shut down publication due to financial burdens in the past year.

On indicator 4, a panelist commented that, "Although there is no expressed regulation that dictates media professionals to write this or that, many independent journalists have been pressured, threatened, and physically assaulted." The panelists described how social-media activists face threats of incarceration and, in some instances, death. They agreed that the atmosphere has pushed many journalists to significantly water down or avoid publishing content in any way critical of the state or powerful non-state actors.

One print-media panelist suggested that the indicators of the MSI cannot actually capture the gravity of the dangers private journalists in Ethiopia face on a daily basis, especially while working on investigative reporting.

A radio journalist on the panel offered a different view, suggesting that the threats rarely turn into actual incidents of violence. The case of journalist Amare Aregawi, who sustained life-threatening wounds in an assault four years ago, was, she said, a rare exception. The same panelist described an incident in which she herself received threatening text messages while covering a story and said she was able to report her concerns to the appropriate authorities.

Another panelist disagreed, citing "confirmed reports where security personnel threatened bloggers of serious harm should the bloggers decide to continue on their course." The panelist elaborated: "There are more people now who believe they can threaten media professionals and get away with it because they have real or perceived support of the state apparatus of different levels and scale. The perpetrators, in most cases, may not have any relations to law enforcement or other branches of government, but they are a result of a dysfunctional justice system and a feeling of empowerment from the ruling party to act as vigilante guardians and harass those who openly speak. It is difficult to establish whether these groups are sanctioned and state-sponsored or function on their own."

Another said harassment has progressively morphed into a more systematic phenomenon in which the state-controlled print media periodically launch campaigns calling on the government to bring "selected private-press journalists to 'justice'" and shut down their papers. Amharic-language state daily *Addis Zemen* carried out such a campaign against the weekly independent *Addis Neger*, which was closed down after its editors were allegedly tipped off about an imminent arrest. A similar campaign against the *Awramba Times* was followed by its editor-in-chief's fleeing the country and the subsequent shutdown of the paper. This type of campaign

claimed its third victim when authorities closed down the *Fitih* newspaper.

At one point, a panelist said, a group of Chinese expats working for telecommunications giant ZTE came to the *Fitih* offices to face off with its journalists after the paper had run a story about employee abuse at the Chinese-owned company. *Fitih* journalists also reported that local administration officials visited the newsroom to intimidate them. The radio journalist on the panel was skeptical about how common such occurrences are, and the panelists had a heated discussion on the matter.

The panelists said harassment, constantly increasing threats, and imprisonment under the antiterrorism legislation are the major reasons why Ethiopian journalists are fleeing their country.

For indicator 5, the panelists agreed that despite laws and regulations that encourage editorial independence, government media continue to be controlled by political appointees and all program content is guided by ideological considerations. Board members of state media do not represent the political spectrum; a one-party appointment system prevails. Likewise, government media managers were reported to receive direct orders on tone and content.

Two panelists said they had encountered cases in which editors gave prepared questions to state journalists (allegedly with guidance from the government communications office) prior to press conferences at the prime minister's office. Any deviations from the format would have been understood to have had serious repercussions for the journalists. That said, a panelist noted, "private journalists were not pressured to have their questions censored or revealed in any manner."

The public media, which now generate forecast-beating revenue and profit, are tax-funded but are fully dedicated to serving the interests of the governing party. They engage in purposeful marginalization of pluralistic voices, directly and pervasively smear opposition politicians and the private press as "enemies of the state," and frequently (and illegally) opine on sensitive legal proceedings involving opposition parties.

Editorial independence remains a core value in principle at government media establishments, but it is absent in action. Public institutions and state-owned businesses routinely deny information and advertising to private papers.

Libel is a civil offense in Ethiopia. Yet the panelists complained that in practice, the burden of proof falls on the journalist, though the media law makes it clear that it is the prosecutor's duty to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. One panelist who has witnessed a number of libel and related court proceedings explained that it is now a common practice

to see judges openly help prosecutors build their cases “when the arguments and evidence appeared to be weak, which is a more common happening, as prosecution against journalists is almost always supported by feeble and insufficient evidence to convict and sentence them.”

Five members of the panel likewise raised cases where either they or their close colleagues were sued for libel and saw their cases argued better by the judges than the prosecutors. One cited cases in which a judge reversed his decision when the prosecutor reminded the court that the case was between “interests of the state and an individual,” and others where the judges corrected prosecutors when they made mistakes and also guided witnesses away from statements that would have crushed the prosecution in a fair and independent trial.

A panelist described the trial of Temesgen Desalegn, editor-in-chief of the defunct *Fitih*, on charges of contempt of court as a case of gross misconduct in which, he said, judges and the prosecution conferred before deciding on the ruling.

The panel noted that “the 100,000-birr fine for defamation convictions exponentially exceeds those for much harsher offenses, like rape and child-labor abuses, which extend only a few thousand birr.”

Obtaining information for publication in general and particularly for the private media remains highly challenging. Ethiopia’s access-to-information law empowers all citizens, not just journalists, to seek and obtain information where there are no overriding exceptions to withhold the information on national security and/or related confidentiality grounds. But the panelists agreed that this constitutional right is usurped by officials who deny journalists information at all levels of governance. Private-media reporters face a double challenge—first, they are looked at suspiciously for being journalists and second, because they work for establishments designated by the state, they are viewed, as a panelist put it, as “rent-seeking, sleeping with neoliberal agents, and anti-development.”

The panelists agreed that access to information is, in reality, not a right and that it squarely depends on whether public-relations staff will cooperate with requests or subject them to endless and unaccountable bureaucracy, rendering them useless. “Public-relations and communications officers hide behind formal requests,” a panelist said, and the access-to-information law is not enforced.

Government officials are more comfortable giving information to state media and the party-affiliated Radio Fana (now the biggest private broadcast corporation in the country). One panelist noted that when being interviewed by *The Reporter*, the biggest private newspaper and well recognized by officials, even ministers opt to speak on the

condition of anonymity about issues with almost no potential to draw controversy.

A panelist noted that the “government’s privilege to deny information on the basis of national security and stability exceptions must apply to all media. But selected private media are excluded from government press conferences, and directives are given to selected state offices not to entertain information requests from identified media houses.”

Another cited incidents in which the national bank had rejected requests to provide published reports because the person in charge did not think journalists had the right to the information. Other cases involved the requesting of information on malnutrition, drought, security, and the inefficiency of development projects. Not only do these requests circulate uselessly around offices without any response, but the journalists who make them may find themselves under official interrogation.

“Information that deals with the health condition of party and government officials, failed projects, and the financial details of party-affiliated businesses remains completely off limits to journalists,” a panelist said.

One panelist cautioned that, “Many online outlets, including social media, may not be considered news sources” and said that journalists must accept the national security exceptions for access to information. But this was not a widely held view.

Access to news sources is limited by the blocking of websites, though journalists are able to use the Internet. Media are allowed to reprint or rebroadcast foreign and/or local programming or news agency information, but the EBA strictly oversees the rebroadcast of programs from foreign sources (such as the VOA). There is no consistent and defined standard of fair use, but significant changes have been implemented in the past two years to recognize and protect intellectual property rights in media content.

The INSA frequently blocks international news media sites, such as the Africa section of Al-Jazeera’s website, whenever stories appear about Ethiopia’s government that are viewed as negative. Prominent news media sites that were blocked because of reporting on Prime Minister Meles’s health and whereabouts included the *Washington Post*, ICG, the *New York Times*, a number of Ethiopian diaspora opposition websites, and numerous blogs.

“It is simply unacceptable...except in a few remaining authoritarian regimes in the world,” a panelist said of such practices. “In addition, it is not up to the government to classify which online media are a worthy news source for journalists, and which are not.” The panelist also noted that “at a time when Facebook is serving as a source of news even

in less connected nations like Ethiopia, social media can't be categorized as non-news media by either the government or fellow journalists."

Regarding indicator 9, the government imposes no legal definition of who is capable or eligible to assume journalistic duties. But the government communications office, which handles all licensing and accreditation for media personnel, will arbitrarily deny applications for press passes.

No government regulations prevent the practice of journalism by those of any gender, ethnic, religious, or other demographic groups. Administrative restrictions do apply for specific groups of reporters/editors identified by the government, and the licensing process is used as a means of control. Entrance to journalism schools is likewise not officially restricted by the government. However, MA programs in journalism at government universities admit applicants from government media on special quotas reserved for party members and state media personnel, a practice sanctioned by university administration and government officials. No explicit government directive calls for the hiring of entry-level journalists, but the party facilitates employment opportunities for many job-seeking graduates.

The panelists concluded that the constitutional guarantees of freedom of thought, opinion, and expression are violated by laws, explicit directives, and implied consensus in government offices—unless the end result of protecting these rights is one that favors government positions.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Ethiopia Objective Score: 1.34

Fact-checking and verification have shown some degree of improvement over the past few years, but they remain lacking and are part of a serious pattern of problems in terms of maintaining professional standards of journalism. Most practicing journalists are not professionally trained, and some panelists said the government has used this as an excuse to persecute journalists, which has, in turn, prompted journalists to censor themselves. Reporting does not consult a wide variety of sources, mainly for two reasons—sloppy news-gathering methods and insufficient attention to standards and ethics, and a deep-rooted unwillingness of relevant sources to impart information.

Subjectivity is another major challenge to quality and standards. Journalists are often criticized for infusing their personal points of view into news stories or approaching reporting from biased angles. However, the panelists also said that more journalists are now trying to employ some level

of objectivity. In cases where not all sources are consulted, reporters state in their stories the problems encountered while gathering the information and also give space to opposing views. Despite these improvements, background research as a practice has a long way to go, and journalists still fail to adequately grasp context and details before they publish or broadcast a story. One panelist noted: "We are still in the [mode of] 'he said, she said' journalism, and stories are mostly single-sourced."

"The problem of poor professional standards is also related to the publishers' major interests, which are mostly profit and direct and indirect political gain," another panelist noted. A third noted that many who train in journalism either do not actually go into the field or "do not want their careers to be directly tied to the profession because it does not pay them." Those who do go into the field tend to lack the experience and training to uphold proper ethics.

Interview techniques were deemed to have improved, with more technical experts quoted in news stories. The relative ease by which economists and other experts can comment on news issues has also strengthened the depth of content, though the politically charged government media have replaced such commentary with incendiary political rhetoric. Under official pressure, journalists for state media "present one-sided, openly political, and unethical content," a panelist noted, "[and] the language they use to present the other side of the story is a sufficient indication of their complete disregard for professional ethics." Private media suffer from some similar problems, the panelist said, particularly given that owners and editors lack training.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

There has been some improvement in terms of attribution, but plagiarism remains rife among broadcasters.

Regarding indicator 2, journalists' associations have not helped in the development of ethical standards but, on the contrary, have engaged in a destructive smear campaign against each other, undermining the reputation of the profession. However, the Ethiopian Media Council, which was established in August 2012 after two years of painstaking negotiations between representatives of private media organizations and other stakeholders, has promised to develop a code of media ethics and hopefully to curtail the government's heavy hand in regulating media offenses. That said, the panelists expressed concern that the government would eventually co-opt the council.

The panelists noted that current standards have normalized corruption among journalists. One panelist described how employees of state media have received plots of land from the government as a reward for favorable coverage.

Many news organizations have not developed in-house codes of ethics, and where such codes exist, enforcement generally remains poor. Constraints include the scarcity of good journalists in seeking a replacement for someone who has violated ethics. Media professionals are, in numerous instances, reported to have accepted payments and/or gifts in exchange for favorable coverage, advertisements, or negative coverage of adversaries. "It is a common practice for many journalists to receive transportation and lunch allowance for events that are held inside the capital city," a panelist noted.

State-owned ETV and private, corporate-backed papers have been heavily implicated in corruption allegations. There is also sometimes a lack of distinction between news reporting and advertising placements, especially at selected private papers and party/government-owned broadcast outlets. Experienced journalists with bigger and more established networks have been more associated with corruption and favoritism than have new entrants to the industry.

One panelist described a case in which a private paper was "heavily engaged in selective tarnishing of individuals who were known to have fallen out with the owner of the financier of the paper and the ruling party." The paper later ran afoul of the government and was closed.

Regarding indicator 3, reporters, editors, bloggers, and social media activists are forced into self-censorship due to fears, both real and perceived, of risking their safety more than of losing their jobs. In addition to the government crackdown on critical voices, self-censorship is strengthened by intimidation from the business and political elite, who may react angrily to news stories that paint them in a negative light. Editors customarily advise press journalists and

photographers to use caution while gathering and imparting information. At state media outlets, editors are driven by ideology in deciding on the finer details of tone and content. Editors in private media, though to a lesser extent, also warn their staffers of sensitive reporting.

"The self-censorship forbids critical issues in the likes of corruption of high government officials, their income, party-affiliated business, and their benefactors, etc., from being reported unless with a great personal and institutional risk," a panelist noted.

Regarding indicator 4, journalists cover all key events and issues in the country, but private journalists' access to government press functions is often limited. Freelancers and independent bloggers are shunned by the communications office when they ask for event accreditation. National security, flagship projects, drought, human rights, and critical reporting on the growth and transformation plan are issues that, covered in unfavorable ways, could trigger administrative or verbal reprimands from officials. There are numerous cases in which editors blocked reporters from covering certain events for fear of persecution by offended parties.

Freedom to cover security issues of national and international concern has deteriorated to a point of an indirect yet official ban through the enforcement of the 2009 antiterrorism law. Many key events are covered well in national and minority (print or broadcast) media. And news of significant national events deliberately downplayed by mainstream media has been extensively disseminated by blogs and social networking tools, especially Facebook. A case in point was the three-month absence of Prime Minister Meles before his death was confirmed in August 2012. Bloggers and social-media activists with sources in political circles repeatedly leaked information that forced the government to defend its position and clarify the allegations. Subsequent news of Meles's widow's refusal to vacate the prime minister's residence also went viral, although the mainstream media preferred to stay away from the minefield of this topic.

A panelist raised an incident in which his editor advised him against covering a student protest, but he decided to do so anyway. "I did my job after I was escorted inside by an assistant of the school who fully knew my duties as a journalist. But when I tried to exit the school premises, I was detained by security personnel." The panelist was released only when he was able to contact a police commissioner who was an acquaintance. Essentially the same thing happened, he said, when he tried to report a story about faulty sewage pipes.

Regarding indicator 5, media jobs are among the lowest-paying in Ethiopia, and though editors' salaries and benefits have shown marked increases in the past three years, reporters are still paid much less than their counterparts in other sectors. Much of the questionable practices of per diems and gifts for journalists, panelists argued, stem from this lack of proper compensation and the resulting low morale. Many journalists split their time working for one media house on a full- or part-time basis and freelancing at other communications jobs. Freelance journalists negotiate their rates; pay is normally minimal and barely covers the professional worth of the job. "Pay levels in media houses are not on par with any other industry, as investment in media is not viable, thus providing ample ground for corruption," a panelist said.

There is a strikingly high disparity in the salary levels of state vs. private media professionals. Private publishers pay attractive salaries and benefits packages to seasoned editors, while state professionals, as civil servants, receive only modest annual raises.

Entry-level salaries for reporters are significantly lower than those for senior journalists and for junior employees in other sectors. In many cases, media professionals give up on the low pay and benefits and leave the business.

Regarding indicator 6, sports and entertainment programming—discussions of soccer, relationship advice, call-in shows—vastly eclipses news and information, and audiences often complain of this, especially on broadcast stations.

The panelists noted that "entertainment is less costly and a safer way of filling media content without raising any eyebrow. Most media outlets prefer their programming to be heavily dominated by the entertainment segment, as it tends to be not as controversial and allows listeners to call in without any inhibition."

"Sports and little mind-teasers often dominate the bulk of FM [radio] programs," a panelist said. "The TV programs are different in the sense that they are dominated by 'development' programs (propaganda material) and music."

A recently passed law that stipulates a 40/60 allotment of advertisement and content could help correct the skewed balance in newspapers.

Regarding indicator 7, the panelists argued that though most government outlets can afford to buy modern news-gathering equipment, their journalists (more than their private-press compatriots) do not have such equipment. The lack of technical facilities and equipment is vividly felt in the daily broadcast services of Ethiopian TV (ETV), as old cameras,

bad angles, color, and light, and poor editing of visual and voice combine to reduce the quality of content. Radio programs and print products suffer from similar equipment deficits. Media houses are now connected to the Internet, and employees are able to access it (though not dependably). A panelist also noted that there is a 195 percent tax on professional video cameras.

Regarding indicator 8, specialized news coverage has come to prominence in the past two years. Business, mining and aviation, sports, music, politics, and culture are now more satisfactorily covered by well-known journalists. Investigative reporting is, at best, in its infancy; there may be people with the skills and enthusiasm to do it, but the political climate dampens this enthusiasm.

Selected media do a better job than others in covering niche topics. The private *Amharic Reporter* is known for politics, while the other private weekly, *Fortune*, is acclaimed for its business and economics coverage.

A handful of bloggers on political and social topics have emerged in the past two years, with thousands of online followers. Though their analysis has been slowly improving in depth, they remain highly partisan, and their followers are divided on a pro/anti-government basis.

Reporters are usually recruited straight from university language and journalism departments, and editors often complain that they are not prepared to work on investigative reports. Editors are relatively better equipped in terms of education and experience to engage in specialized reporting, but staffing limitations do not allow them to go out to report stories themselves; they must rely on novice reporters to gather information.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Ethiopia Objective Score: 1.38

There are not many news sources by which people can cross-check the validity of reports, and very few outlets report multiple points of view, though their stated editorial policies call for them to do so. Coverage tends to fall into political camps, and mainstream viewpoints are covered while minority views are not. For the most part, coverage focuses on the feud between the ruling party and opposition, with government policies deemed glowing successes or utter failures, depending on the news organization's political leaning.

"ETV, the largest in terms of coverage and resources, has transformed itself in the past 20 years from

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

government-owned to party-owned propaganda machine," one panelist said. "It does not even try to reflect on the government's failure or weaknesses." The panelist cited a recently aired documentary titled "Akeldama," which accused opposition leaders of collaboration with the government of neighboring Eritrea; it aired during a terrorism trial.

As mentioned, the private media have been squeezed to a point where they now visibly shy away from covering politically harmful topics. But though feeble, they remain an option. Community media completely serve the interests of the governing party. Only one opposition party was allowed to print its own newspaper, but that was shut down in August 2012 after the paper ran articles critical of Meles's policies in the few days following the announcement of his death. Blogs, text alerts about major events, and social media are relied upon for news and information, although users generally believe content is unverified and objectivity is lacking in many cases. An increasing number of people, out of lack of choice, rely on Facebook and other social networking tools for news, though they understand the ethical limitations involved. "It is the government's journalistic attitude that has forced people to gather news from social networks and depend on gossip on the most important topics of the country," the panelists said.

Access to domestic or international media is heavily restricted by laws, administrative directives, and economics. The government has used administrative injunction to shut down critical newspapers and jams satellite and radio frequencies that belong to opposition and independent and critical sources (such as the VOA Amharic service); it also blocks

opposition websites and blogs when they condemn the government. More indirect restrictions include licensing delays, rejection of requests for information, and multiple legal challenges (such as those faced by former *Fitih* editor Desalegn) aimed at wearing down editors and reporters to pressure them to stand down.

Access to the Internet is provided only by the government-owned Ethio Telecom, and registration is required with them to buy Internet lines. Satellite dishes do not yet require registration, but authorities are weighing the possibility of making it a requirement. Television sets must be registered, and the government collects an annual fee for each television, "making Ethiopia one of the few nations in the world that collects rent from citizens for owning television sets and [gives them] one-sided, subjective, and state-aggrandizing content," the panelists noted.

It is not illegal to listen to foreign broadcasts, and free satellite channels (on Nile Sat and Arab Sat) offer international news. A recently passed law aimed at regulating Internet-based services (directed against Skype, Viper, and others) strengthens a 1993 law that bans VOIP services without the permission of the regulating agency. No one has been prosecuted under this law to date.

Social networking is generally tolerated, although the INSA will target selected pages from Facebook, YouTube, and BlogSpot. Internet access remains expensive for the individual user (\$70 per month for a connection speed of 1 MB per second). Internet cafés do offer faster connections, but they are prohibitively expensive for the average user in a nation where the GDP per capita is \$550 per year. Internet access in rural areas is still lacking, as most cannot afford it. Slow Internet access is available on mobile phones, but an overloaded network and inability of the provider to fix it have reduced the service to meaningless levels. Faster mobile Internet access is available, but cost implications mean that only a few thousand of some 20 million subscribers enjoy the service. The middle class (those earning more than \$300 per month), battered by out-of-control inflation and reduced purchasing power, has less money to pay for satellite, newspapers, and the Internet, but more urban residents do have access due to economic growth.

Rural audiences' access is mostly limited to ETV and state radio, but the connectivity of rural communities is growing, thanks to expanding electric grids, satellite (for those who can afford it), and cheaper radio sets. The low literacy rate—35 percent nationally—hampers the expansion of online and print media but does not affect the majority demographics, as television and radio are the main sources of information across the country's vast rural regions.

The panelists agreed that state media not only fail to follow a public-service model, but that they have unequivocally devolved into a one-party propaganda machine. The regime's "revolutionary democracy" model of governance forbids the state media from entertaining alternative views, regarding them as "neoliberal and anti-development." Editors and reporters at these institutions see their role as serving and protecting the ideology and interests of the ruling party. Many of those unwilling to fall in line have sought asylum abroad. Public-affairs programming venerates the moral and strategic high ground of the government, but educational and cultural programming is more even-handed and professional.

There are no independent news agencies in Ethiopia. One government-owned and another private but party-affiliated agency gather and distribute news. Although they are not independent, their services are freely available to all in a nondiscriminatory manner requiring only attribution. Walta Information Center, the party-affiliated agency, has developed the capacity to distribute audio, video, and online content. International agencies, notably Reuters and the Associated Press, are frequently used by local media outlets.

Private media produce their own news and are not required to use what state news agencies supply. Private media seek to cover pluralistic views on issues, though self-censorship is a problem, while state media rely heavily on cheerleading news items provided by government offices.

Community media organizations produce their own content, but their accountability to state and federal governments makes independent and ethical production impossible. Bloggers and other new-media journalists (including social-media users) produce their own content and also provide links to stories that may have slipped the public's attention.

Regarding indicator 6, media ownership is not transparent in terms of the individuals, financiers, or interest groups involved. Private media tend to deny bias toward interest groups, but allegations are rife about the role of financial and political backing in skewing content. Media consumers have grown savvy, however, at judging sympathies based on tone and content. Blogs are more transparent due to their more personalized nature and the bloggers' openly professed allegiance to given interest groups.

A recently passed law made it mandatory for organizations to provide information about their editors-in-chief and barred owners from editing their own outlets, but in practice this has little meaning. There is no monopoly or oligarchy with regard to private media ownership, but the government's network of newspapers and television and radio stations has vastly grown

across all regions, leading to a monopoly on information in large parts of the country. The case of the merger of Walta and the marketing department of Fana Broadcasting into the WAFA joint venture is an example of ownership's shaky transparency.

It is uncommon for business conglomerates to own media outlets, but one of the country's big conglomerates is alleged to have funded at least two papers in an effort to promote itself. That said, there was no evidence in this case that editorial independence was compromised. Foreign investment in Ethiopian media is banned, a situation praised by the panelists, who cited concerns about foreign money being used to meddle in national interests.

Mainstream media report on social issues, including gender, social conventions, and religion—but not ethnicity or sexual orientation, which are very sensitive topics in a conservative nation governed by ethnically based federalism. Coverage seeks to conform to religious and cultural virtues and ethnic and political sensitivities.

Gender balance and ethnic diversity are well reflected in the journalism profession. Minority-language community media do exist, but "in terms of accommodating a broad spectrum of interests, communities, and languages, the limited media outlets at this juncture are not accommodating these diverse groups," one panelist said. "The challenge, I think, stems from the economic non-viability of such endeavors. The same applies to covering local events in rural Ethiopia because of financial limitations; very few media can actually operate outside Addis Ababa." Likewise, community media do not reflect the spectrum of social interests at the local level, as they must adhere to official guidelines aimed at promoting government ideology.

The mainstream media largely cover issues of national significance. Regional news is available via television programming and local FM radio stations. International news is not covered well in the broadcast media, but satellite news channels fill the gap. Citizens must turn to international sources for news from abroad, as the quantity and quality of coverage locally lags far behind.

Media with a nationwide reach are limited to ETV and the party-controlled Fana Broadcasting, which is allowed to establish relay stations throughout the country. The other private FM stations based in Addis Ababa are not allowed to expand their coverage outside the capital.

Community radio relies, to some extent, on rebroadcast of national news but also reports on local developments; technical and ethical standards are poor. Use of SMS alerts and citizen journalism are not common in the regions.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Ethiopia Objective Score: 1.25

With the exception of the big government-owned media organizations, fewer than half a dozen private papers, and three FM stations, media outlets are not known to operate as efficient and well-managed enterprises. Major reasons for this include planning failures, financial shortfalls, high turnover of staff, and the unwillingness of investors and editors to focus their energy and money on a sector that the government has explicitly branded as rent-seeking and aligned with anti-development forces. A few media outlets and their affiliate firms do implement business plans to help guide financial planning and personnel management and to customize marketing roadmaps according to the companies' changing needs.

Financial practices are in line with the country's laws and standards but fail to meet international quality standards. Only a few FM stations, state outlets, and four private papers have professionals who handle accounting, marketing, and human-resources duties. The customary procedure is that editors-in-chief of papers and managers of state media take it upon themselves to handle personnel management issues, going outside written guidelines.

"Most Ethiopian media are heavily dependent on individuals—to be more specific, their founders," a panelist said. "And when their founders face problems personal or government made, their entire operations are understandably in legal and operational limbo. Only a few have their own accounting and marketing departments."

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

A panelist elaborated: "We can say mere chance explains how these papers stay in the market in terms of discussing cash flow and financial structure...papers in this country are generally pushed out of the business either due to bankruptcy or political pressure." The panelist noted that *Addis Admas*, one of the country's oldest and most popular private papers, was recently asked by the authorities to pay more than 1 million birr in taxes: "Any tax office run by evidence and logic, any political and other motives aside, knows very well a paper that sells less than 25,000 copies per week does not make money to merit tax in excess of a million birr."

Community media are in their infancy and do not have the resources, skill, or vision to operate efficiently and sustainably. Bloggers do not make money at their work; most depend on other jobs to pay their bills.

Private media outlets collect their revenue from advertisement and sponsorships. State media receive tax money and other large-scale government subsidies for advertising and sponsorship, but as discussed, such funds are highly politicized. State broadcaster ETV collects a mandatory annual license fee, which boosts its direct subsidies and advertisement revenues. As mentioned earlier, a few business and political interests have invested money in selected private media as they seek influence.

A panelist noted: "Media houses operate on subsistence... [they] do not have viable business plans, and there is little by way of institutional capacity, as they cannot employ competent managers. In terms of revenue, government advertisements are hard to come by and are limited to state media."

Subscription has helped major papers, such as *The Reporter*, *Fortune*, *Addis Admas*, and *Capital*, to expand their coverage and advertising base, but the high cost of printing means the more copies they print, the greater financial loss they incur.

Advertising is becoming a well-developed tool for business and nonbusiness organizations alike. All the medium-sized and large companies, both private and public, do use some form of media outlet to advertise their services and products. Understanding of market principles is also gaining traction, although important variables, such as demographics, have yet to be properly and consistently considered. Vying for political and business ties is also a considerably important factor in advertisement placement, selection of ad agencies, and content.

Advertising agencies set their rates, but it is a seller's market, mostly dictated by the bigger media outlets. Government institutions show a clear preference for advertising in state media, again putting private organizations at a disadvantage. Official agencies have also canceled ad-placement agreements

(or turned down offers) from a few media organizations that have been designated “anti-government.”

Most state media, though receiving substantial public funding, charge increasingly higher prices for advertisement; a few of them align their prices with those of the private sector to be more competitive. Commercial advertising constitutes the biggest share of advertising in private and state media and in print and broadcast outlets. Classified ads, holiday greetings, and congratulatory messages account for a growing share as well. Professionals are assuming bigger roles working for marketing and promotion agencies, overseeing the production of better-quality content, and attracting higher prices for their services in the face of mounting competition. (That said, ads in general are lagging in technical quality and innovation.) Advertising agencies actively work with radio and television stations; Internet and mobile services are almost nonexistent.

Advertising is not well developed outside of the capital, although television and radio expansion is slowly changing that. However, most advertisers are businesses based in Addis Ababa and a few other regional cities, and their targets are middle-class segments of those cities’ populations. Advertising is dominated by local companies; no international agencies are involved.

Media managers at private papers are under pressure to use more and more ads as the only source of revenue to offset losses they incur from printing copies. *The Reporter*, the biggest private paper in terms of institutional capacity, subscription, and circulation figures, loses 14 birr per copy; it sells for 7 birr, but print costs stand at 21 birr per copy.

Subscriptions are not dependable, especially for private papers, and are limited to foreign agencies and expatriate organizations’ offices, located in Addis Ababa. Agencies and businesses all subscribe to the state daily for the purpose of checking on government tenders.

A panelist noted that “the sector lacks a frequent and reliable system of gathering information with regard to marketing, broadcast ratings, and the like.”

As mentioned earlier, a recently approved law set a mandatory 40/60 advertisement/content ratio. Though panelists supported the principle, one noted the concern “that in the face of the mounting and arguably deliberate cost pressure in printing, the passing of the 40/60 ratio can be construed as yet another ploy to put papers in a systemic financial paralysis.” Community and state media are allowed to sell advertising but must also adhere to the 40/60 directive.

The panel was concerned about the newly revised standard contract put forward by the state printer, Birhanena Selam;

all publishers were required to sign, or risk termination of their printing contracts. The agreement essentially allows the printer to evaluate the content of the paper and to refuse to go to press if it believes the content is against state interests. “The practice seems a perfect business agreement that protects the printers from the cascade liability risks of the Criminal Code,” panelists noted. “But in essence, and considering that the state printer prints all political private papers and many magazines, it brings back censorship that was believed to have been explicitly abolished by the constitution following the fall of the military regime in 1991.”

In the past three months, this agreement has prompted Birhanena Selam to cancel business agreements with *Fitih* and opposition weekly *Finote Netsanet*, effectively shutting down both of them permanently. The cancellation of the *Fitih* contract was reportedly preceded by a demand from the Ministry of Justice to impound an edition of the paper that reported on the situation surrounding Prime Minister Meles’s illness. The ministry denied involvement, saying it has neither the intention nor the mandate to effect closure of papers, but Birhanena Selam told editors that unless they could obtain a letter from the ministry requesting the resumption of business, the cancellation would not be overturned.

As indicated earlier, the government also uses advertising and other commercial incentives to exert pressure on critical media, placing ads only in outlets that are favorable to it.

“Advertisement is unfairly distributed among private outlets, depending on who owns them and their attitude toward the government. Though state media are funded by taxpayers’ money, they are not used to explaining their expenses, even in their reports to parliament, making them unaccountable to the public that bankrolls them,” a panelist noted.

Research on audience demographics and preference is not consistently used to inform marketing and programming decisions. There is a serious lack of specialized companies to help the media obtain detailed knowledge of their audience to tailor products. Strategic business planning is lacking at all but a few outlets for two broad reasons—the state-owned media’s monopoly on official information and resources and the government’s negative view of private-media expansion.

Journalists are more often tailoring their products to the requirements of the market with the intent of attracting advertisements, a trend that has proved detrimental to quality.

The EBA is the sole organization that officially tracks circulation numbers and conducts content analysis and evaluation. Though these activities may not be driven by political objectives, the EBA’s findings are used for political

ends to weaken private media. The EBA publishes its annual evaluations, which are freely distributed.

Birhanina Selam, which prints more than 80 percent of the country's publications, also tracks figures on circulation number, ad/content ratios, publishing costs, and profit margins. This information is given to interested parties, albeit in a nontransparent and nonsystemic manner.

Internet statistics are handled by Ethio Telecom, which was deemed the poorest customer-service establishment in the country, incompetent at documenting figures and unwilling to impart information.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Ethiopia Objective Score: 1.03

The panel regarded the establishment of effective trade associations as an impossible undertaking, even more so because the government's divide-and-conquer strategy has pushed factions of the media to relentlessly attack each other.

There is no publishers' association, but a steering committee was formed in June 2012 to look into forming one, with the goal of tackling deliberate cost pressures with a more unified voice. Broadcasters are either government-owned or fear being seen as standing up against the party. The three journalists' associations are not representative of industry interests but are driven by politics or nepotism.

The government focuses on either co-opting professional media organizations or pushing them to the fringes. Any form of healthy engagement has been lacking throughout the history of private media in Ethiopia (i.e., since 1991).

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Associations (assuming their legal standing means they are functioning in some way) support themselves through membership fees. The two smaller associations have no members remaining; either they have left journalism altogether or, in the case of those who work at state outlets, have migrated to the larger Ethiopian National Journalists' Union (ENJU), which is sympathetic to the government.

"The associations are rubber-stamp and do not promote the interests of their members, let alone the media in the country," a panelist said. "Promoting professional standards and lobbying the government is nonexistent."

The one association that maintains some form of cooperation with international associations (membership with the International Federation of Journalists, in this case) is the co-opted ENJU. The government has not banned the other organizations, but their activities are closely watched.

Sector-based journalists' associations in the country can mobilize their members for professional progress. Examples include associations for environmental, sports, tourism, and women journalists, among others. The Ethiopian Environmental Journalists and Women Journalists associations offer capacity-building training through support from foreign partners, as well as provide members with networking opportunities. Their efforts and those of other NGOs are severely limited by strict regulations, as described below.

There are not many strict conditions for membership in these associations. Journalists whose specialized areas are used as mobilizing bases by the associations have no problem joining, and general-interest reporters can also join. The organizations' effect on the quality of journalism has yet to be seen in any significant measure, but they have helped their members to strive for more and better coverage in their areas of interest. Dues and grants from international partners are used to cover administrative expenses; they receive no government subsidies.

A panelist did note concern about government interference in these organizations: "I joined the newly established Ethiopian Tourism Journalists Association, which was supposed to be free of government interference. But I have quit ever since I heard the focal person of the association say, in one of the meetings, that the association was set up under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I do not want to be linked with either the government or any opposition party in my work."

The Charities and Societies Law of 2009 explicitly prohibits NGOs that receive more than 10 percent of their funding from foreign sources from supporting media capacity-building, media independence, and freedom-of-information initiatives. NGOs also cannot engage in advocacy on governance issues, health, women's

empowerment, children's and elderly rights, gender, or any human-rights issues.

NGOs still manage to work on service delivery and promotion programs and give large-scale funding to health and women's economic-empowerment programs, albeit with much less visibility. The Population Media Center and Internews have done good work on capacity-building, especially for health issues, though the government ordered Internews to shut down its offices.

No civil-society groups are allowed to act as watchdogs, debate legislative proposals, provide legal support, or react to media violations. The state-established Human Rights Commission is seen as in thrall to party politics. The only critical civil-society voices are those based in the United States and Europe; they collect and analyze information from journalists in Ethiopia to issue press releases and call for attention to alleged abuses.

The only home-grown NGO that has worked to expose press-freedom violations is the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO); however, the group has been administratively strangled, and its funding has dried up after the Charities and Societies Law was passed. EHRCO is now unable to solicit funds to conduct surveys or campaigns.

The most recent casualty of the law is the German-government-funded Heinrich Ball Foundation, which was forced to shut down its governance work in the country even though it was working with government partners.

Journalism programs at private and public institutions are of mediocre quality and do not include sufficient practice-oriented training to prepare young people to join the profession. Student-run media do not exist, and students who go abroad for journalism degrees decide, in many cases, not to return to Ethiopia. Media outlets have a serious shortage of skilled journalists and would be willing to accommodate journalism graduates, but many of the top students opt instead for jobs with international organizations.

One panelist noted an instance before *Fitih* shut down in which the paper posted a vacancy to recruit junior reporters, which drew more than 30 graduates to apply. None were able to pass a simple exam given as part of the interview process, the panelist said.

There are multiple short-term training opportunities for journalists from both state and private outlets, and they are accessible to anyone who applies. Most of these programs are offered by international organizations and are held in Western countries; travel and other financial assistance are provided.

Media-management, policy, and health-related training are in the highest demand. Training in the use of multimedia applications, now more applicable in Ethiopia than before, is also offered, but lack of financial support makes access difficult. Advertising-related training is not common and is mostly not covered by grants. All career levels have training opportunities.

There are undue restrictions on importing and/or buying materials, such as transmission equipment, but media outlets' purchase of software and video equipment is treated similarly to that of other businesses in terms of applicable taxes and duties.

Companies that sell media equipment are managed in the same way as other businesses in the country. Importing and distributing companies tend to lack modern business practices.

Printing firms are not sufficient to support the industry, and the government, as discussed earlier, uses the printing process to rein in unsupportive media outlets and suppress content. Papers have also been told they would face limits on the use of color printing or number of pages.

Many government offices maintain a policy of not buying critical private papers for circulation among staff. The state maintains monopolistic control over the Internet, broadcast transmitters or towers, and mobile networks in the country. The monopoly has resulted in acute problems of Internet access and the reliability and speed of service.

Ethio Telecom engages in pervasive blocking of selected media, but allocation of domain names or IP addresses is not under any state-sanctioned pressure.

The existing ICT infrastructure in Ethiopia does not meet the needs of the industry. Media outlets are not able to offer digital broadcasting, Internet streaming of audio or video, podcasting, or content via mobile-phone networks. Cities fare a little better in ICT service availability, while access problems get much worse in rural areas.

List of Panel Participants

Due to the oppressive political environment, panelists for Ethiopia agreed to participate only on condition of anonymity. The panel discussion was held on September 5th, 2012.